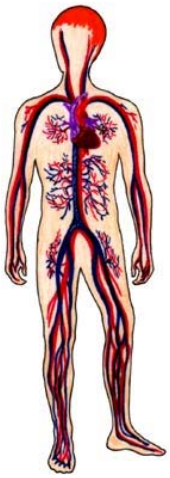
X-Plain™
Nuclear Scan

Reference Summary



People come to the doctor often with problems that affect different internal organs of their body.

Doctors frequently use nuclear scans to get information on how organs are functioning and to detect problems in specific areas of the body such as the thyroid, heart, liver, and bone.

If your doctor has recommended a nuclear scan, the decision whether or not to have this procedure is also yours.

This reference summary will help you understand better the benefits and risks of this procedure.

Procedure

Depending on the organ your doctor wants to look at, you can have a somewhat different nuclear scan than someone else.

The major difference between the different scans is the pharmaceutical compound used and the way it is administered.

Compounds that contain radioactive material are delivered into the body.

An image is taken of the body with a special machine that detects the radioactive compound.

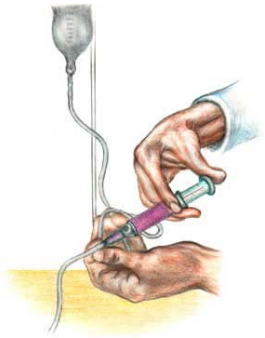
Radioactive materials emit a very weak radiation that is picked up by special machines.

After years of research, it has been proven that this very weak radiation poses no measurable health risks, except possibly for unborn children.

Compounds that tend to settle in the thyroid are used for thyroid scans. Compounds picked up by the heart are used for heart scans. The same is true for the bones, liver, and other organs.

Using these tests, doctors can determine whether your thyroid is over or under functioning. Cardiac or heart problems can also be detected.

Bone cancer, fractures, or degeneration can also be detected. Infection sites can be pin-pointed.



The radioactive compound is administered either by swallowing or injecting it into the blood stream. Sometimes blood is taken from the patient, the compound is mixed with the blood, and then it is injected back into the patient's bloodstream.

The test can either be done in one setting or in different stages. The patient may have to come back for more pictures a day or two later.

This procedure is usually done on an outpatient basis. You will be able to go home a few hours after the test.

Once the radiologist is satisfied with the pictures, the test ends.

Risks and Complications

This procedure is very safe. There are however very few possible risks and complications. These are very unlikely but possible. You need to know about them just in case they happen. By being informed, you may be able to help your doctor detect complications early.

Radioactive materials are used during this procedure. The amount of radiation during this test is deemed safe. However, this same amount could be dangerous for unborn children. It is therefore very important to make sure you are not pregnant before an elective radiological test. A pregnancy test can be performed in case you are not sure.

Some people may have allergies to the compounds used in this test. Make sure to tell your doctor about your allergies and about any possible reactions to any sort of dye used on you in the past. This is very rare.

Summary

A nuclear scan can be helpful in detecting problems in many of the internal organs.

Different organs may need different types of compounds and the compounds may need to be swallowed or taken directly into the blood. Nuclear scans may also take different times to complete.

This scan helps detect problems in organs such as the heart, liver, bones, and thyroid.

Nuclear scans are very safe. Risks and complications are exceedingly rare. Knowing about them will help you detect them early if they happen.